

Message Text

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15

ACTION EA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3904

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, AS, UR

SUBJ: YOUNG SOVIET VIOLINIST AND HANDLERS LEAVE AUSTRALIA

REF: CANBERRA 5314

1. DISPUTE THAT HAD ERUPTED IN PERTH AUG 11 OVER WHETHER YOUNG SOVIET VIOLINIST, GEORGI ERMOLENKO (REFTEL) WISHED TO RETURN TO SOVIET UNION OR REMAIN IN AUSTRALIA WAS RESOLVED BY GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA AUG 15. AT REQUEST OF MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, SENATOR WILLESEE, RAAF MADE AVAILABLE ORION MARITIME RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT WHICH FLEW ERMOLENKO TO SINGAPORE, ACCOMPANIED BY REST OF QUINTET OF WHICH HE WAS MEMBER; PROFESSOR KABALEVSKY, WHO HAD ACCOMPANIED QUINTET; AND MR. K. C. HENNE, OF THE DEPT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICE IN PERTH. ABC RADIO MORNING OF AUG 16 REPORTED ERMOLENKO AND PARTY HAD ALREADY LEFT SINGAPORE ON SOVIET AIRCRAFT ENROUTE TO SOVIET UNION.

2. PRIOR TO DEPARTURE OF ERMOLENKO AND PARTY FROM PEARCE RAAF BASE NEAR PERTH, REMAINING TRADE UNION BAN ON DEPARTURE OF ERMOLENKO HAD BEEN LIFTED, THOUGH THERE WAS STILL WESTERN AUSTRALIA SUPREME COURT WRIT OUTSTANDING, REQUIRING
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ERMOLENKO'S APPEARANCE IN COURT AUG 16.

3. COMMENTING ON DECISION TO MOVE ERMOLENKO AND PARTY FROM PERTH BY RAAF AIRCRAFT, SENATOR WILLESEE SAID, "THE DECISION TO TAKE THIS UNUSUAL STEP WAS MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT WHEN IT BECAME APPARENT TODAY THAT THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY TO END THIS EXTRAORDINARY INCIDENT." HE ADDED, "I AM AS SATISFIED AS I CAN BE." REGARDING ASSURANCES FROM THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN CANBERRA THAT ERMOLENKO WOULD NOT BE PUNISHED FOR HIS BEHAVIOR IN AUSTRALIA. WILLESEE SAID, "IN RUSSIA HE IS A JUVENILE, AND MR. SMIRNOV (V.N. SMIRNOV, SOVIET CHARGE) ASSURED ME IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE THAT THIS WOULD BE HELD AGAINST HIM."

4. AUG 15 OPPOSITION LEADER SNEDDEN DESCRIBED GOVERNMENT'S ACTION AS "UNDERHAND AND CONTRARY TO AUSTRALIA'S LIBERAL AND DEMOCRATIC TRADITIONS".

5. COMMENT: WITH BOTH FEDERAL HOUSE AND SENATE NOW IN RECESS, ERMOLENKO AFFAIR WILL PROBABLY FADE AWAY.
HARROP

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